

Activity 1.12 Exploring Cultural Baggage (The Arts)

Module: 1. Identity and Culture

Duration: 45 Minutes

Social Development Themes: Arts

Summary:

This activity builds on the existing activity in the toolkit. The group creatively look at the significance and influence of what they are carrying with them in terms of their own culture baggage – be that history, religion, occupation, politics, national character etc.

Learning Outcomes:

Value different perspectives

Ability to support, learn and share through, dialogue

Approach:

1. Invite the participants to close their eyes and talk them through a short visualisation exercise where they think about their cultural baggage and how it feels to carry it with them. Is it heavy? Do they feel weighed down by it? Has it been handed down by their parents? Invite participants to imagine taking one thing out of the baggage that they want to leave behind. Is the bag lighter? How does it feel now? Can they walk faster?

2. Now ask the group to visualise one thing they really want to keep in the bag. Why is it important to keep this safe and preserve it? How do they feel travelling through life sharing this with others?

3. Ask the participants to open their eyes. When they're ready, give the participants a couple of minutes to look for two objects – either in the workshop room or, if there's time, they could look outside. The first object should represent what they'd like to leave behind and the second what they'd like to carry with them.

4. Ask participants to find a partner and share what the objects represent. If they can't find something they can always describe what the object is. They can position the objects wherever they'd like in the space around them, or they can hold onto them.

5. In pairs, participants should share their thoughts about their objects and what they represent. Allow 2 minutes per item. The listeners should just listen, without asking questions or commenting.

6. At the end of this exercise give an opportunity for the pair to reflect on their experience of sharing and then invite the group back into a circle and ask them to share their reflections.

Debrief:

What is inspiring or difficult when thinking about our own cultures and the influence that has on us? Was it easier to think about what you wanted to hold on to or what you wanted to leave behind?

How do our personal choices influence our cultures? And how do our cultures influence our personal choices? All of us influence, and are influenced by, the cultures around us. In what ways can we embody and celebrate our cultures and also acknowledge our personal beliefs and the beliefs of others? Where do we see the tension between the 'personal' and the 'cultural'?

How might acknowledging our cultural luggage help us communicate with people who are different to us? Why could it be important in for communities to understand more about their cultural reference points?

This is potentially quite an emotional exercise for participants; facilitators should ensure that participants are OK at the end of the exercise, perhaps end the session with a de-roling activity or an energiser.